

AMO Policing Task Force

Terms of Reference

Context

Municipal governments continue to face the fiscal challenge of funding the growing cost of policing services in Ontario. This financial strain is coupled with ongoing public protests and calls to defund the police, which has created an environment of diminishing trust with the institution of policing.

To address the pressing issues of fiscal sustainability and declining trust, AMO is creating a Policing Task Force to build on a decade of advocacy work and advice to government on policing legislation, regulations and modernization. Now, more than ever there needs to be a renewed focus and dialogue around responsive policing reform in Ontario.

The following facts illustrate the issue:

- Ontarians pay the highest policing costs in the country. Per capital spending on police by regions has Ontario spending \$362 dollars per person which is \$34 dollars above the national average. If Ontario paid the national average, it could save nearly \$500 million per year. To understand how this came to be, the average annual growth of police spending between 2002 and 2011 was 6.3%. This compares to the inflation rate over the same period of 2.1%. In other words, police spending had been growing at three times the rate of inflation. More recently, an analysis of net operating budgets has revealed that many large Ontario municipalities are paying roughly 15-20% of their net spend on policing services.
- In 2020, the Angus Reid Institute conducted a major study with findings related to public views on policing across Canada. Findings indicated:
 - That Ontario has the highest proportion of people who hold a more negative view toward policing.
 - Indigenous people and those who identify as visible minorities are more likely to feel less secure around and less favourable toward police compared to Caucasians.
 - Two-thirds of Canadians have had at least one direct interaction with an officer over the past five years. For most, this was a comfortable experience. However, those with negative experiences tend to vary by age, gender, and ethnicity.

(Source: <http://angusreid.org/policing-perspectives-canada-rcmp/>)

Property tax dollars continue to be stretched because of a decline in OMPF funding over several years along with added financial strain arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The cost of policing is a growing line-item on municipal budgets today and will continue to be a challenge over the coming years ahead. The need for more fiscal prudence through effective and efficient practices are needed.

As calls for defunding the police are directed to municipal governments as the primary funders for policing services, it clearly lays out the situation and environment whereby municipal governments as funders have little scope of influence or control around both policy and policing service levels.

Purpose of the Policing Task Force

To create a new venue for AMO to discuss, research, and undertake engagement with key experts on policing matters and to report to the AMO Board of Directors on the following:

- The responsive and ongoing development of municipal government recommendations for modernizing the delivery of public safety and community well-being.
- To address municipal government concerns with the decline in trust around policing in Ontario.
- To reinforce or adjust previous call for reforms from the Modernization Task Force with the work of Future of Policing Advisory Committee in a present-day context.
- Review and provide commentary when possible to the AMO Executive/Board of Directors on proposed policing regulations.
- To continue to show the profound fiscal risk of continued increases to the cost of policing and the threat it poses to other public services that contribute to public safety and strong communities.

Duration

The frequency of meetings will be determined by the Policing Task Force. An initial meeting for the Task Force is targeted for April 2023 and then will meet on a bi-monthly basis unless an urgent meeting is needed between regularly scheduled meetings.

The Policing Task Force will provide a regular update to the AMO Board of Directors until the Spring of 2024.

Membership of the Policing Task Force

Representatives to the Task Force will come from across the province. There will be careful consideration given to the diversity of interest, circumstances, geography, and knowledge and experience related to policing activities, approaches, and standards.

It is proposed that the membership be composed of the following representatives:

- Up to four elected representatives from municipalities using the OPP
- Up to four elected representatives from own-force municipalities
- Up to four senior municipal staff from both own-force or OPP-contracted municipalities.
- One representative from the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards
- Nishnawbe Aski Police Service Chief

The Task Force will be supported by AMO staff.

Principles

The Task Force affirms the following principles:

1. The police fulfill a vital function in society. This function requires a legislative and regulatory structure which is periodically modernized to reflect economic and social realities.
2. That policing services are part of an integrated service and policy network that include recognition of the social determinants of health, diverse communities, and contributions to community safety and well-being.
3. That policing culture should be open and amenable to reform based on civilian oversight, public feedback and expectations.
4. Civilian oversight of police services is necessary in democratic societies.
5. That policing continues its adherence to Peel's Principles and that it is reinforced including for purposes of accountability.
6. The current cost of policing and subsequent growth is fiscally unsustainable. Left unchanged, such growth will jeopardize the founding principle of consent. In particular, "the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect." In other words, continued cost growth which ignores economic reality will have a negative impact on civil society.
7. Municipal governments need a voice on the level of policing services and resources required ("Pay for say").
8. The capacity to pay is an overarching consideration at local, regional, and provincial levels. This capacity is measured in part against the provision of other critical services that are vital to the safety of a community.
9. Policing is a service to people and property, occupied or unoccupied.
10. Some of the functions that police officers currently conduct could be delivered by alternate and more economical means (i.e. civilian investigators responding to vehicle theft or residential burglaries which are not in progress).

Work Plan

Upon convening the Policing Task Force, a review of existing positions and activities will help inform a work plan moving forward.

Indigenous Relations

AMO and municipal governments are committed to building strong relationships with indigenous and First Nations partners. Seeking to build better relationships, AMO will examine opportunities for partnerships and ensure consideration of indigenous and First Nations knowledge and interests when examining provincial changes around policing.

Digital Government Lens

AMO will seek to apply a digital lens and forward-looking approaches to provincial changes around policing. This will include finding an appropriate balance between any current needs (i.e., proclaiming existing legislation and regulations) with future needs, such as Next Generation 911 and its potential impact on policing services (and interoperability of emergency services broadly) in 2025 and beyond.

Appendix A

Background:

AMO has provided comprehensive recommendations during the provincial government's lengthy review of policing legislation. The need to modernize the delivery of this service is well-documented in various submissions over the past decade on behalf of our municipal members. Recent activities include:

- In 2014, AMO's OPP Billing Steering Committee put forward a report which researched options to equitably allocate policing costs for municipalities which use the OPP. The Committee conducted a review of the government's proposed billing model and examined other model options so implications could be understood. It also underscored the need for efficiency and effectiveness improvements for policing in general.
- In 2015, AMO's Policing Modernization Task Force issued its report including 34 recommendations on how to modernize policing. The Task Force interviewed experts, reviewed the best academic research available, sent representatives to the 2015 Summit on the Economics of Policing and Community Safety in Ottawa, and had thorough and lengthy discussions on specific issues about the future of policing. Key recommendations included:
 - Make changes to the interest arbitration system.
 - Improve the quality of the existing governance and civilian oversight system.
 - Make legislative changes to permit the greater transfer of specific functions to civilians or other security providers where appropriate.
- In 2016, AMO issued a Municipal Guide to Police Services Act Consultations. The guide highlighted municipal issues with community safety and well-being planning; modernizing what police do; the education and training of officers; and accountability to the public and governance.
- In August of 2019, the Ministry of the Solicitor General started consultations on the regulations needed to support the new Community Safety & Policing Act, 2019. AMO staff continue to participate in the Policing Table discussions to inform the new regulations, where possible. The Ministry of the Solicitor General is expected to complete regulations by the end of 2021.
- In 2020, AMO produced a Discussion Paper titled New OPP Detachment Boards: Building a Framework for Better Policing Governance. This paper outlines a series of guiding principles put forward to prompt municipal considerations as the Province began its consultations.